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## HOW GREELEY SOLVED THE SCHOOL-LUNCH PROBLEM

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DOROTHY SHARTEL FINLEY

Formerly President, Greeley Woman's Club, Greeley, Colorado

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Among the many new educational movements started in recent years, one of the most successful in showing immediate results is the serving of hot school lunches. The plan was first started in the interests of the undernourished children. When it became apparent that the efficiency of this group was increased as much as 50 per cent, it was decided that all children would be benefited if hot lunches were provided for them.

In some of the larger cities the school boards have recognized this as a part of the regular educational plan and have provided for it in their budgets. With the exception of these few places, wherever school lunches are provided the plan has been started and successfully managed by some other agency before being taken over by the school board.

In some communities the teachers are entirely responsible for this work; in others, the parent-teachers' association; and in still others the lunches are being served by churches and women's clubs.

The work was started three years ago in Greeley, a town of about 12,000, and has proved very successful.

Greeley is located in the center of the sugar beet industry and consequently has a large foreign population made up of the beet workers' families. Practically the entire enrolment of the east ward school is composed of children of German-Russian parents. There are also some Japanese children and a few Mexicans. While the majority of the parents are in comfortable circumstances, they know very little about how to provide nourishing food and still less about sanitation in the home.

The Red Cross visiting nurse, working with the school physician, found many undernourished children in this ward. Investigation disclosed the fact that without exception these children were not able to do average school work.

The matter was brought to the attention of some of the church organizations, and a meeting was held, attended by members from each of the churches. An organization with a finance committee was at once formed. This committee appealed to every lodge, club, and church society in the town. Practically every society offered to help either with funds or with personal service. The work was financed and under way in a few weeks after the appeal was made.

The first year the equipment was very crude, but it served the purpose. The school board furnished the room and the tables and chairs. A gas plate, cupboard, two kettles, bowls, and spoons comprised the working material. The room was in the basement of the school building and was rather dark. The Red Cross nurse, with a little help from the teachers, whitewashed the walls.

The various societies of the churches conducted "showers," asking for canned fruit, tomatoes, and fresh vegetables. The lunches were served by the church women, each church taking a week at a time and sending two women each day.

The menus were planned with the idea of furnishing a hot soup or drink to supplement the cold lunch brought from home. It was soon found advisable to furnish the complete lunch.

The first plan was to serve free lunches, but it was found that nearly all of the parents are able and willing to pay the five cents necessary to cover the cost. Only the undernourished children of parents too poor to pay are given free lunches.

Plans were carried out much the same at the beginning of the second year with practically the same committee in charge. Some much needed equipment was purchased. At the opening of the school year the teachers in the north ward asked that the noon lunches be served there also. This ward has very few foreigners but is made up largely of day laborers. In a great many cases the mothers are the only support of the families and have to be away from home all day. This means that the children have an early breakfast, a cold lunch, and a late evening meal.

The Parent Teachers' Association in this ward gave cooked food sales and entertainments with the help of the teachers and bought all the equipment that was needed.

With the help of the food and vegetable showers of the churches, the lunches in the north ward have always paid expenses. No free lunches are given here.

In the fall of the second year the Greeley Woman's Club hired a community nurse. She followed up the cases of the under-nourished children and saw to it that they took advantage of the lunchroom and that they were given milk or whatever they needed. She also conducted nutrition classes in the school.

The plan of having the foreign mothers help in the serving of the lunches was tried during the second year in order to interest them in the health of their children. This was not a success, however, because of language difficulties.

Last summer the Woman's Club of the city took over the financing of these lunches, and they are this year managed by the child welfare committee of the club. The church societies are holding fruit and vegetable showers as usual. Each church takes its turn in serving, as do the different groups in the Woman's Club and other organizations in the town.

The school board has installed a new sink in the lunchroom in the east ward.

The plan for next year is to hire a woman in each ward to do the work, thus relieving the women who have so willingly donated their services for three years.

It is hoped that the school board will by that time take over the lunchroom and make it a part of the educational program.

The favorite menus are those having a good vegetable or cream soup, crackers, fruit, and top milk. Usually a graham cracker is served with the fruit. Good liberal helpings are given, and second helpings are very common. Meat and potatoes have been added to the menus, and a variety offered so that the children will not tire of the fare.

The splendid co-operation between the women having this work in charge, the organizations financing it, the teachers, and the parents has brought out a spirit of community interest that is decidedly worth the effort.